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ABSTRACT

A study examined the ways that basal readers portrayed the family. It was expected that the readers would give only token representation of both parents working or of one-parent or mixed marriage families, and that very few portrayals of reading or of reading materials would be found. Eight basal readers from 6 publishing companies for grades 1 through 3 were analyzed, resulting in 367 stories dealing with the family. The results indicated that the stories were about people of varied ethnic origins and dealt with various story settings in history as well as with different countries. Family settings were varied from city to the suburbs, with the latter portrayed in almost half the stories. Only 6% of the depicted families were one-parent families, and divorce was mentioned only once and alluded to twice; however, no story mentioned stepparents or stepchildren. The death of a parent was referred to twice, but occurred prior to the story. Children were seen reading in 32 stories, but parents were rarely found reading. The work world of these families was vague or nonexistent, and only nine stories portrayed both parents working in a two-parent family. (HTH)

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A STUDY OF HOW THE FAMILY IS PORTRAYED IN BASAL READERS

BY
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Education at Kean College of New Jersey

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study arose from questions this researcher had regarding the portrayal of the family in the reading materials currently used in grades one, two, and three in the school system where she is employed. Many research studies, i.e., Durkin[1], Mazurkiewicz[2], Robinson[3], Teale[4], have been done about the family in relation to other factors: however, at this point, this author has not found a study that described how the family is portrayed in reading textbooks used at the elementary school level.

The school system where this writer is employed is evaluating reading programs for grades one to three. One reading program will be selected, and it will become the school's basic reading series for 1982-3. In the process of participating in this endeavor, interest arose in the family unit and its composition. Thirty-five per cent of this school's population happens to come from

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[1]Durkin, Dolores, Children Who Learn To Read At Home, The Elementary School Journal, Vol. 62, October 1961. Children Who Read Before Grade One, The Reading Teacher, January 1961.

[2]Mazurkiewicz, Albert, Helping Children Read, N.J. Reading Association, 1980.

[3]Robinson, Helen M., Why Children Fail in Reading, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946, 257 pp.

[4]Teale, William H., Positive Environmnets for Learning to Read: What Studies of Early Readers Tell Us. Language Arts, Vol. 55, No. 8, November and December 1978.

one-parent families. There is also an increasing number of mixed marriages and children coming from these homes.

In defining the problem the following questions were answered by reviewing the written and pictorial content of eight commercially available reading series used in the United States. First, who makes up the family unit? (Mother, father, number of siblings, live-in grandparents, others.) Second, what jobs do the parents hold? Are they traditional or non-traditional? (Mother, father, others.) Third, nationality would be determined. Are there any mixed family marriages? Fourth, where does the family live? (City, suburbs, house, apartment, trailer, condominium, etc.)

HYPOTHESIS

Three hypothesis were tested. (1) The researcher expected to find token representation of "both parents working". (2) It was expected that very little if any representation would be given to one-parent families or families in which mixed marriages are present. (3) Very little role-modeling in reading and few reading materials were expected to be found.

The significance of a study of this type seems apparent. Children are faced with compulsory reading of standardized texts at an age when they are very impressionable. The scope of the reading at this time in their lives is more limited than in any other period. Children

should be presented with books that provide them with an understanding of life as it is and not as a distortion. Children should not grow up thinking that a family must consist of mommy, daddy, brother, sister, and a dog. They must be helped to feel good about knowing that it is all right to belong to a family which is different from the traditional stereotype.

The primary purpose of conducting this study was to gain information about the basal series, available from commercial publishers in 1981, how the family is portrayed in them and how much role-modeling in reading is being done, should serve as another measure to consider when selecting materials for a specific population.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations of this study should be noted. The data-gathering was limited to eight commercially available basal reading series for grades one, two, and three. The conclusions are limited to the observations and evaluations of them by this researcher.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

In the last twenty years there has been a transition in the American family. Divorce, death and separation of never married parents plus statistics stating that fory-five per cent of all children will live at least one year of their lives in a one-parent home are in sharp contrast to the American family portrayed in basal readers several decades ago.

Twenty years ago basal readers portrayed the American family as two white Anglo-Saxon parents living with their children who had pet dogs or cats. Typically it was Daddy, Mommy, Dick, Jane and Spot. This was not a typical American family then and it certainly is not now. Changes have occurred in basal readers to include minorities and working women in leadership roles. How well the textbooks portray the transition in the American family is the purpose of this study.

The research outlined in this chapter covers specific topics related to the current investigation. The importance of the family for the child's success in school, divorce and its effect on the child, sex role stereotyping, and the basal reading series portrayal of the family will be reviewed.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Importance of the Family

The home is especially important during the first

six years of a child's life. Pine[5] says that a child suffers if not stimulated intellectually and that the difference between poor and middle class children can be seen at one and a half years of age. Hunt[6] adds to this saying that the role of life experience is important to a child's development, to intellectual ability, and to reading development. He also states that a degree of retardation can result from lack of stimulation, and it may not be reversible.

Language development during the pre-school years is significantly connected to the influence of the home. Spache[7], Bloom[8], Levine[9] and others emphasize the importance of adequate language experiences. In 1975 White reported, "To begin to look at a child's educational development when he is two years of age is already much

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[5]Pine, Maya, Revolution in Learning - The Years From Birth To Six (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

[6]Hunt, J. McV., Intelligence and Experience (New York: Ronald, 1961).

[7]Spache, G. D. & Spache, E. B., Reading in the Elementary School (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1973).

[8]Bloom, Benjamin, ed., as cited in Administrators and Reading, edited by Thornston R. Carlson, International Reading Association, Harcourt Brace Jovonavich (New York, 1972).

[9]Levine, Daniel V., Raising Standards in the Inner-City Schools, Occasional Papers, No. 11, (Washington, D. C.: Council for Basic Education, 1966).

too late."[10]

Gates[11] says that the early years are important and reading is learned at mother's knee. He goes on to say that children who suffer early limitations come to schools that cannot overcome their problems. Schools as they are set up, he contends, cannot make up for these deficiencies. Bellugi[12] sums it up by writing, "Most language learning takes place well before children enter kindergarten."

Durkin's studies[13] of children who learned to read before first grade clarified her feelings that readiness is a product not only of genetic endowment but also of prior learning experiences. She found that early readers all had some kind of help.

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[10]White, Bertrand L., The First Three Years of Life (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 4.

[11]Gates, Arthur L., Reading: Seventy-Five Years of Progress- Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading Held at the University of Chicago (Chicago: Univeristy of Chicago Press, 1966).

[12]Bellugi, U., "Simplification in Children's Language". Language Acquisition: Models and Methods, R. Huxley and E. Ingrams, Eds. (New York: Academic Press, 1971). As found in Sandra Anselmo, "Improving home and preschool influences on early language development", The Reading Teacher 32:139 (November 1978).

[13]Durkin, Dolores, Children Who Learn to Read at Home, The Elementary School Journal, Vol. 62, October 1961. Children Who Read Before Grade One, The Reading Teacher, January 1961.

Some interesting observations were collected during Durkins' insterviews with the parents. All of the parents of the students who read early plus twenty-two of the thirty parents of the non-readers reported that they read to their children before they started school. The early readers' parents however, tended to read, discuss pictures, point out words, and do the things that could help a child learn to read.

William Teale[14] in 1978 surveyed the studies of early readers and found four factors that were repeatedly associated with their environment. Teale pointed out that these four factors exist as entities for the child learning to read. They are not independent but are part of a reader's network of experiences.

Teale's four factors are as follows: First, an availability and range of printed materials in the environment. Durkin found in her studies that the early readers had a great exposure to reading materials. In a related study Clark found the use of the public library as a source of reading material. She wrote:

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[14]Teale, William H., Positive Environments For Learning to Tead: What Studies of Early Readers Tell Us. Language Arts, Vol. 55, No. 8, November and December 1978.

> Although these early reading experiences for some of the children were in books from which they had enjoyed stories, for some of the children the print in their immediate environment played an important role. This was particularly true of the boys who showed interest in sign-posts, car names, captions on television and names on products at the supermarket.[15]

Teale indicated that the mere availability does not explain the importance of printed materials in the environment of the early reader. To understand this, one must consider the second factor.

Second, reading is "done" in the environment. Mazurkiewicz[16] recommends that parents and especially fathers start to read to their children as early as six weeks. He stresses role modeling, language development, and the warmth and love that is associated with a pleasureable act of reading.

Durkin's studies have shown the success of parents reading to their children. Jerry Weiss[17] emphasized the use of libraries and said that family reading sessions are most important in setting the tone and the right atmosphere for successful reading in school.

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[16]Mazurkiewicz, Albert, Helping Children Read, N. J. Reading Association, 1980.

[17]Weiss, Jerry, Helping Children Read, N. J. Reading Association, 1980.

The IRA, NJEA, and some book companies make available printed materials that promote parent involvement in helping their children. They all stress reading to the child. Researchers like Clay[18], Harris and Sipay[19], Spache and Spache[20], Durkin[21], and others support and promote reading to children.

Third, the environment facilitates contact with paper and pencil. Durkin[22] also found in her New York study that the children were very interested in scribbling and drawing and from this came writing. The parents also indicated the children's interest in writing letters, names, etc.

In 1973 Chomsky[23] suggested reversing the read

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[18]Clay, M. M., Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behavior, Auckland, N. Z.: Heinemann Educational Books, 1972.

[19]Harris & Sipay, How to Increase Reading Ability (6th Ed.), New York: David McKay, 1975.

[20]Spache, G. D. and Spache, E. B., Reading in the Elementary School, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1973.

[21]Durkin, Dolores, Children Who Learn to Read at Home, The Elementary School Journal, Vol. 62, October 1961. Children Who Read Before Grade One, The Reading Teacher, January 1961.

[22]Durkin, Ibid.

[23]Chomsky, "Write Now, Read Later". In Language in Early Childhood Education, edited by C. B. Cozden, Washington, D. C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1972, pp. 119-126.

then write sequence, thereby having students teach themselves to read. The Language Experience Approach is an example of this, and it is quite successful. It can be used by parents and teachers alike. The child dictates his/her thoughts and sees the words written down and then learns to read his/her own words.

Fourth, those in the environment should respond to what the child is trying to do. The parent or others must meet the child's needs, answer questions, etc. Durkin also found support for this technique in her investigations.

In summarizing Teale stated that a positive environment for learning to read is one in which a parent or sibling or significant other person in the child's life responds to the child's attempts to make sense of the printed words.

Robinson[24] did an intensive study of Why Children Fail in Reading. She reaffirmed other studies by stating that it is the emotional tone in the home that is the most important factor affecting children's reading. She indicated that an unhappy home, filled with tension,

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[24]Robinson, Helen M., Why Children Fail in Reading, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946, 257 pp.

worry and poor family relationships, hampers interest and progress in reading.

From the literature reviewed it is well documented fact that the major influence on the child's success in school is the family. The family's influence is greatest on developing attitudes toward education and providing opportunities for learning.

Divorce and Its Effect on The Child

The importance of the effect of the family on the developing child's learning potential has been well established. The fact that the divorce rate has more than doubled in the past decade has real meaning for school authorities. The U.S. Bureau of the Census reported that four out of ten marriages end in divorce and that 60% of the divorcing couples have children at home.[25]

Norton and Glick[26] state that 50% of all divorces occur within the first seven years. Thus, many children are at an age which is critical to the development of language and experience background according to Bloom[27],

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[25]U.S. Bureau of Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 297, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976.

[26]Norton, A.J. and Glick, P.C., "Marital Instability: Past, Present and Future", Journal of Social Issues 32 (1976): 5-20.

[27]Bloom, Benjamin, ed., as cited in Administrators and Reading, edited by Thornston R. Carlson, International Reading Association, Harcourt Brace Jovonavich (New York: 1972).

Spache[28], Hunt[29], Pine[30], Durkin31, and Gates.[32]

Wilkinson and Beck[33] reported estimates that 20% of all elementary school children have divorced parents and in some kindergarten and first grade classes the figure is closer to 40-50%. The U.S. Bureau of the Census[34] projects that 48% of all children born in 1980 will live a "considerable time" with only one parent before they reach eighteen years of age. This represents approximately twelve million children.

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[28]Spache, G. D., and Spache, E.B. Reading in the Elementary School (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973).

[29]Hunt, J. McV., Intelligence and Experience (New York: Ronald, 1961).

[30]Pine, Maya, Revolution in Learning - The Years From Birthe to Six (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

[31]Durkin, Dolores, Children Who Learn to Read At Home, The Elementary School Journal, Vol. 62, October 1961. Children Who Read Before Grade One, The Reading Teacher, January 1961.

[32]Gates, Arthur L., Reading :Seventy-Five Years of Progress - Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading Held at the University of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

[33]Wilkinson, G.S., and Beck, R.T., "Children's Divorce Groups", Elementary School Guidance and Counseling 26 (1977): 204-213.

[34]U.S. Census - as quoted by Brown, Frank B. "A Study of the School Needs of Children from One-Parent Families", Phi Delta Kappan, 537-540, April, 1980.

Brown[35] reported that the average time between divorce and remarriage is 3.2 years. To this number add the 6-8 months which is the average time between separation and divorce, and the result shows that the average child will spend about four years in a one-parent home. This is nearly the child's entire pre-school life.

The Kettering Foundation and the National Association of Elementary School Principals identified eighteen items to measure school performance, and they jointly initiated a study to compare the functioning of one-parent versus two-parent children in twenty-six schools. Frank Brown[36] reported this study and its significant and alarming findings for educators and education in general. One-parent homes produced a disproportionate number of low scoring students in the high achievement group and a disproportionately high number of students in the low achievement groups. Differences at the high school level were less dramatic than at the elementary school level.

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[35]Brown, Frank B., "A Study of the School Needs of Children from One-Parent Families", Phi Delta Kappan, 537-540, April, 1980.

[36]Brown, Frank B., Ibid.

Other results showed excessive tardiness, discipline problems, suspensions, and truancy to be disproportionately higher among the students from one-parent homes. Students living with one parent or with no parent tended to have a higher mobility rate than students from two-parent families.

Title I programs were also shown to enroll a disproportionately higher number of students from one-parent homes. At the high school level it was discovered in this study that only students from one-parent homes were expelled. The dropout rate was very high too. One-parent and "other category" students made up one fourth of the population but produced 40% of the dorpouts.

Brown's study, which is still continuing, produced a number of conclusions:

1. The rising number of one-parent families means that schools must face this fact and the problems in new and better ways.

2. Schools must review and update records for identification of one-parent children so counseling can be made available if needed and that teachers can be sensitive to the needs of these children.

3. School calendars must be revised to meet the needs of the working parents so they can have access to school personnel and activities.

4. School services and curricula must undergo revision to better accommodate the newly identified needs of a growing number of children from one-parent families.

5. School systems must assume a major leadership role in providing effective programs in the field of parenting. This can be done through adult education programs.

Wallerstein and Kelly[37] reported on part of a five year longitudinal study by the Children of Divorce Project in Greenbrae, California. This study involves sixty divorcing families from northern California and their 131 children ages 3-18 at the time of the marital separation. The authors confirmed that divorce precipitates a major crisis in the lives of most children, and the stress produced often spills over into the academic areas.

The children whose parents are divorcing share common feelings and concerns that are complexly woven into their school behavior. The pattern of responses depends on the child and the factors relating to the divorce, particularly the amount of conflict between the parents. Two important questions recurred: "Who will take care of me?" and "Will my relationship with my mother and father last?" Children were forced to face a world that was not as reliable and less likely to be concerned with their hopes and needs. This unpredictable life now occupied much of their thinking and attention.

Munger and Morse's research[38] indicated that the

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[37]Wallerstein and Kelly, "When Divorce Rocks a Child's World", The Educational Forum, 43:428-33, May, 1979.

[38]Munger, Richard and Morse, William C., "When Divorce Rocks a Child's World", The Educational Forum, 43:428-33, May, 1979.

background for a child's emotional disturbance lies in the emotional atmosphere of tne family environment, regardless of whether it is intact or not. During a divorce there is stress and emotional and interpersonal adjustment. For many, feelings of loneliness, lowered self-esteem, depression, and helplessness interfere with their parenting roles. Some research has shown the serious break in mother-child relationships after a divorce. Children after a divorce often suffer from their unmet needs because the parents are preoccupied with their own needs and demands placed on them in their changing role of being head of a one-parent family.[39]

Skeen and McKenry[40] reviewed the literature and wrote suggestions for schools and teachers. They indicated it is reasonable to assume that schools may be providing emotional support and continuity to these children of divorced parents.

Wallerstein and Kelly[41] found that the school was useful in providing structure in the child's life during

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[39]Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., and Cox, R., "Divorced Fathers". The Family Coordinator (1976):417-429. As cited by Skeen and McKenry, in Young Children.

[40]Skeen, Patsey, and McKenry, Patrick C., "The Teacher's Role in Facilitating a Child's Adjustment to Divorce", Young Children, 35:3-12, July, 1980.

[41]Wallerstein and Kelly, "Children of Divorce", The National Elementary Principals, 59:51-58, October, 1979.

this time of divorce when the family was separating. A close relationship with a teacher was also noted as helping many children. They recommend the following for schools in offering additional support: teacher awareness, teacher willingness, changes in curriculum and attitude, after-school care, and adult educational programs.

Ricci[42] wrote about the expanded families occurring after divorce and remarriage. These new multiple family units present countless complications for the school to deal with. Also, the children must now relate to their natural parents, stepparents, and other possible extensions of the family. As Albert Solnit, Director of the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven says, "Divorce is one of the most serious and complex mental-health crisis facing children of the 80's."[43]

Sex Role Stereotyping

Robb[44] wrote, after reviewing the literature, that children's perceptions of sex-appropriate behavior and activities are influenced by maternal employment. Her

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[42]Ricci, Isolina, "Divorce, Remarriage, and the Schools", Phi Delta Kappan, 60:509-511, March, 1979.

[43]Solnit, Albert, Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut, as quoted in The Children of Divorce, Newsweek, February 11, 1980.

[44]Robb, Barbara, Maternal Employment and Children's Sex-Role Perceptions, Educational Research, Volume 23, Number 3, June, 1981.

study supported other studies with the view that maternal employment influences children to hold less stereotypical views of sex-appropriate behavior in the home. It appears that it is the full-time employment of the mother which is associated with less stereotypical perceptions of sex-appropriate domestic activity. Robb's study also confirmed other research findings that there is a greater influence in shared domestic activities when the woman in the house works full-time.

Mischel[45] in 1970 observed that younger children are most likely to use their parents as role models. Therefore if the models share household duties the child is likely to generalize this to think that all adults do this too. This belief is constantly reinforced by observing this behavior in the home. Thus, it is the direct personal experiences that help children determine what is sex-appropriate and what is not.

Robb continues her writing with the possibility of the recession forcing women out of the labor market and back to the home. In this event children would not see their mothers in the role of worker as well as mother.

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[45]Mischel, W. (1970), 'Sex typing and socialization'. In: Mussen, P. H. (Ed.), Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology, New York: Wiley.

This would be a setback for the next generation should this occur.[46]

Ruplay, Garcia, and Longnion[47] evaluated reading materials from 1976-8 for sex role portrayal. The major area of concern is the portrayal of males and females and its impact on elementary school pupils. They found that publishers have attempted to equalize portrayals of males and females in story content in basal readers, but in supplementary reading materials males were still being represented twice as often as females. They suggested that researchers evaluate basals separately from supplementary materials and that comparisons of old and new readers be discontinued.

Characterization of the Family in Basal Readers

Kealey's[48] study was based on two questions: 1. What are the types of families presented in basal readers, and 2. how many stories of each type are in the readers? He limited his study to six second grade basal readers printed after 1978. He found that 76% of the stories

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[46]Robb, Barbara, Maternal Employment and Children's Sex-Role Perceptions, Educational Research, Volume 23, Number 3, June, 1981.

[47]Ruplay, William H., Garcia, Jesus, and Longnion, Bonnie, Sex role portrayal in reading materials: Implications for the 1980's, The Reading Teacher, April, 1981.

[48]Kealey, Robert J., "The Image of the Family in Secondgrade Readers", Momentum, 11:16-19, October, 1980.

related children and adults in some form of family relationship. He defined family as a biological relationship or marriage which included: a child with two parents, a child and one parent, siblings only, a child and grandparent, a child and another relative, husband and wife. Not one story mentioned a child living in a foster home or being adopted.

The basal readers reviewed by Kealey seemed to reflect contemporary American society and the future trend of single-parent families by having 38% of the children living in one-parent families. Only one story in the study specifically stated that one of the parents did not live at home. Fifty-one of the fifty-two single-parent stories ignored the other parent in both the text and the artwork. Kealey's concern is whether this communicates rejection on the part of the parent not at home.

Stories making up 98% of the single-parent families that show disregard for the other parent may be implying rejection as well. Ninety-three (82%) of the parent stories mention the relationship of mother and child, while eighty-one stories (72%) mention the relationship of father and child. 62% of the single-parent families in the basal readers were headed by mothers and the other 38% of the single-parent families were headed by fathers.

Kealey also found that 40% of the children in the basal readers had brothers and sisters and less than 10%

of all the stories had 3 or more children. Less than 12% of the characters in the stories were grandparents. The grandparents portrayal is quite stereotyped and does not reflect the retired people in America today.

In summarizing his study Kealey says that between 22% to 50% of the stories in basal reader stories live in single-parent families. Between 30-55% of the children have brother(s) and/or sister(s). There is never a mention of divorced or deceased parents. Separation is inferred only once. Grandparents are stereotyped. The one point that all readers did share was that all families showed a strong caring relationship among all the family members.

Kealey feels that teachers must be aware of the values communicated in these texts and that through selection and discussion a sensitive teacher can do much to develop family values.

Jane Sutton patterned her study after Dr. Kealey's research. Her study was limited to 3 randomly selected stories from each of seven basal reading series for grades 4, 5, and 6.

Sutton's[49] results showed that 76.8% of the stories

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[49]Sutton, Jane, The American Family as Seen in Basal Readers on the 1977 Indiana State Adoption List. E R I C , April, 1981.

surveyed showed a relationship between a child and some form of family. Her's was in keeping with Kealey's findings of 76%. The other 23% of the stories had no family relationship mentioned.

Sutton writes that only 17% of the general population of children live with one parent. However, Kealey[50] states that the 1980 Census is expected to show 45% living in one-parent families. Sutton's findings show 18.8% of the stories showing single-parent families and 8.7% showing custodial care, plus 23.2% having unknown family relationships. She feels the basal readers representation relates rather closely with the general population.

Women headed the household in 11 of the 13 stories that Sutton surveyed and men headed 2 households. This showed a correlation between the basals and the general population.

Stepparents were never mentioned in the stories. However, in 1978 ten percent of all children lived with a natural parent and a stepparent. (Norton)[51]

The one area the basals do not represent proportionately is that of the working woman. Over fifty per-

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[50]Kealey, Robert J. "The Image of the Family in Second-grade Readers", Momentum, 11:16-19, October, 1980.

[51]Norton, Arthur J. "A Portrait of the One-Parent Family", The National Elementary Principal, 59:32-35, October, 1979.

cent of the women in the United States work, yet basal stories show only 14.5% of working mothers. However, in the stories where mothers were head of the households then 63.6% were working, 9.1% were not working, and 27.3% were of unknown work status.

Sutton and Kealey were concerned with their findings that in the one-parent family the non-custodial parent was mentioned only once in each study. The lack of concern for the other parent in the stories may be giving messages to the child that contradict his/her own feelings of concern. Both researchers were concerned with this point.

Sutton's study showed that 63.8% of the stories did not mention siblings. Siblings are very important to the child and become more important in terms of divorce. All of the stories in both studies did show the family as having loving and caring relationships. Even when there was a conflict in the family it was always resolved with understanding and love.

Summary

The significant influence the family has on the developing child has been established. The crisis of divorce and how it affects the child has been discussed. Children seeing women in work roles and the family sharing the household duties has been established as important for sex-appropriate behavior. These areas are important

to the understanding of the importance of how the family is portrayed in the basal readers that all children are required to read.

Implications

The American family that has dominated our school's basal reading series for years is in sharp contrast to the reality of the 80's. Basal readers are required reading and children in the primary grades are very impressionable as their exposure to life, through reading is most limited at this beginning reading stage. Therefore what they read and see in illustrations makes more of an impression than at any other time in their lives. As reading increases they have more experiential background to relate present reading to. Therefore, in the 80's when predictions are that nearly half of the children born in the United States in 1980 will live "a considerable time" with only one parent, we must be concerned with the family portrayal in our textbooks.

Children of single-parent families have mind-boggling problems to cope with and they need help in understanding their lifestyle. The reality of life today shows that the apron-clad, stay-at-home mother and the unheard of divorced family is something of the past. Presently 57% of all mothers with school-age children work outside the home. It is important that required reading, the textbooks, show a balance of the realities of life.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

PROCEDURES AND METHODS USED

A textbook evaluation form was designed to evaluate the basal readers for this study. The form was patterned to include information from Dr. Robert J. Kealey's survey of family relationships in second grade basal readers which was published in October 1980 Momentum magazine. Jane Sutton's study of April 1981 was patterned after Dr. Kealey's work and was also used in the formulation of this evaluation form. Dr. Kealey studied only six reading series for second grade, of which four were repeated in this study. Jane Sutton studied 4th, 5th, and 6th grade reading materials from seven major publishers. Of these, six will be used for this study. Laidlaw, the publisher used in these two studies, will not be included in this study.

The following book companies were used for this study:

Allyn and Bacon, Inc.		K
Economy	S	
Ginn	S	
Harper & Row	S	K
Holt		
Houghton Mifflin	S	
Macmillan, Inc.	S	K
Scott Foresman & Co.	S	K

(The S after the company name indicates that it was also included in Sutton's study and a K indicates that it was used in Kealey's study.)

Grades 1, 2, and 3 were chosen for this study because at this age the children are the most impressionable,

and their reading is very limited. With this thought the feeling is that the reading material plays a more vital role in helping children form concepts, feelings and attitudes about themselves, family, life and the world in which they live. Later as the child reads more and has more experiences to rely on, the reading text by itself does not exert the same kind of influence because the child is reading many other books and texts as well. However, at any age that reading textbooks are used they are required reading, and it is important that what the child reads and learns from the text and pictures are representative of what we want him/her to learn.

Every basal reader for grades 1, 2, 3 in each series was evaluated. Every story that was about human beings was used. Poems and animal stories were excluded from this study.

An assessment form was developed on which to record information given pictorially or in print by each text. However, the information was to be given only as referenced by the category.

The assessment form included the following categories: main character, child or adult; references to family, 2 parents, mother and child, father and child, significant adults in custodial situation; situations involving significant adult number of siblings; no reference to family; nationality; and type of home. Separ-

ate headings are included to define definite two parent families, mother-headed one-parent family, father-headed one-parent families. Work status is also included for these categories with working classified as non-traditional, traditional, unknown work status, or not working. Stories could also be classified as extended family, parental death, parental divorce, parental remarriage, stepparent mother, stepparent father, foster parent, foster child, adoption, and never married parent.

Another category was included to see who reads or uses reading materials in basals. A main concern of reading specialists is for families to read to their children, so this category was added. It includes the following: type of reading material shown; father, mother, child, or other person reading for instructions, directions, pleasure, or information. Also included was father, mother, or other reading to a child and child reading to another child.

Definitions of Terms

A <u>one-parent family</u> was defined as either a mother or father and his/her children and others as appropriate living together.

In an <u>extended family</u> the main characters include individuals such as aunts, uncles, counsins, grandparents, or other blood relatives.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the evaluations conducted by the writer and therefore include a certain degree of subjectivity. The design of this study was kept as objective as possible. All stories that dealt with people were included, and poems and animal stories were excluded.

The 1981-1982 book series or the latest book published by the eight companies included in this study were used for review. Workbooks and supplemental materials were not reviewed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and analyzes the data. The data are analyzed and reported in written discussion and in graphic form.

The Results

Eight current, 1982, basal reading series of a commercial nature were surveyed for the first, second, and third grades to see how the family was portrayed. The evaluation form which was used can be found in the appendix. From a total of 1,144 stories in these eight series, 367 of them dealt with the family. These stories were about a child and a parent, a grandparent, aunt or uncle in a custodial position. Stories about children alone were not considered to fit into the category of family stories. Table 1 presents a breakdown for each of the eight reading series.

Table 1

BASAL READING SERIED CLASSIFIED BY NUMBER OF PAGES, STORIES, FAMILY, AND PERCENTAGES OF STORIES ABOUT THE FAMILY

	Pages	Stories	Family	% of Stories about Family
Allyn & Bacon	1715	160	48	30
Economy	1790	207	38	18
Ginn	1558	154	39	25
Harper & Row	1664	188	53	28
Holt	1891	119	54	45
Houghton Mifflin	1869	101	36	36
Macmillan	1948	82	35	43
Scott Foresman	2041	133	64	48
Totals	14,476	1,144	367	282

The remainder of this chapter will address the questions raised in the introduction of the paper. The first of these is, "who makes up the family unit?" As indicated in Table 1, there were 367 stories dealing with the family. As can be seen in Table II, of these 367 stories, 205 mention both parents, and 23 stories were declared as being one-parent families. Of these 23 stories, 17 show the mother as head of the household, and six show the father as head of the home. Other custodial roles were shown as follows: aunt - 1 story, Grandma - 3 stories, Grandpa - 2 stories. Live-in relatives were shown in 15 of the stories for two-parent families; usually they were grandparents. In one mother-headed household a grandma and an uncle lived-in.

Table II

COMPOSITIONS OF FAMILY UNIT CATEGORIZED BY NUMBER OF STORIES, PERCENTAGE OF FAMILY STORIES AND PERCENT OF TOTAL STORIES

	No. of Stories	% of Family Stories	% Total Stories
Two-parent families	205	56	18
Live-in relative	15	4	1
One-parent families	23	6	2
Mother headed	17	4.6	1.4
Live-in relative	1	.2	.08
Father headed	6	1.6	.5
Significant adults			
Aunt headed	1	.2	.08
Grandma	3	.8	.26
Grandpa	2	.5	.17

Older basals traditionally show two children, according to the research, but this investigation revealed

that 97 stories contained only 1 sibling as seen in Table III. This indicates that the two-child family remains popular in the basal readers insofar as family size is concerned.

Table III

NUMBER OF STORIES AND PERCENTAGES OF FAMILY STORIES CLASSIFIED BY NUMBERS OF SIBLINGS

	No. of Stories	& of family stories
One sibling	97	26
Two siblings	37	10
Three siblings	11	3
Four siblings	3	.8
Five or more siblings	3	.8

Teachers and babysitters were found to be significant adults in the lives of the children in the basals. Teachers were shown in 47 stories, indicating their significant role in the stories surveyed. Babysitters were represented in 8 stories. One of these stories dealt with a disaster, showing the calm, cool-headed adult sitter who took care of the child during a tornado.

The portrayal of the family also includes situations dealing with the family. There were two stories that mentioned a parent's death, but it was in the past before the story started. One story dealt with the death of an animal. One story dealt with divorced parents; the two boys lived with their mother, and they lost their favorite babysitter. This story was observed three times in three different series with slight changes by the author.

The story, however, was a real 1982 life-like situation which many young children could relate to.

One story was about a child who was adopted, and another story was about an orphan. One story described a child in a Boy's Home.

There were no stories that described a current divorce or separation. Remarriages or never-married parents were unmentioned. One story mentioned a wife throwing the husband out, and he took the child; this story was about Indians and occurred a long, long time ago.

The second question studied was "what types of jobs did the basals show?" The most unusual story showed a woman mayor of New York City. In the family stories, the occupations of the parents were seldom mentioned. In two-parent families the father held traditional jobs in ten cases, and women held traditional jobs in six stories. Only 9 stories indicated that both parents were working. This is only a 2% representation of both parents working.

In the mother-headed single parent families 5 stories showed traditional jobs, and six stories showed non-traditional jobs; six were unknown. Father-headed homes showed only traditional jobs.

The nationality of the families was surveyed to determine if there were any mixed marriages, and none were found. The nationality of the story characters was

often unclear and vague.

Question 3 asked "where does the family live as indicated in the basals of 1982?" In the past the little white house in the suburbs was a common setting. This study found that 58 stories were about city apartments, and 18 indicated a city home of some type. The apartment in the suburbs was seen 7 times. The house in the suburbs was shown in 181 stories, which indicates that it is still the common housing for basal reader representations. Many different forms of housing were seen as stories dealt with different cultures and past history. One story was about a child in a boarding school, and another was about a child in a Boy's Home. There was no mention of any person living in a trailer or condominium.

The final concern of this study was to determine who is reading, whether anyone is reading to another person, and if reading materials are part of the basal readers. Books were observed in 46 stories, signs in 33, newspapers in 15, and notes in 5 stories. One basal series showed just a few reading materials whereas other reading series seemed to offer a much better representation.

Who is reading in the basals? The results show that children were reading in 32 stories, the father read in 8, and mother was reading in 6 stories. The most unusual example of someone reading was in one story where a slave was depicted reading to help plot his escape.

Another story showed an adult babysitter reading to herself.

Who reads to whom? These results are the most surprising and may portray realistically the family of today. A father was seen reading to a child just once; a mother was observed reading to a child just twice. A child read to another child in 5 stories. The babysitter mentioned above also read to the child before bedtime.

Summary

Are the publishers of eight basal reading series that were surveyed keeping up with the changing American family? Do their stories reflect the changing times?

A large percentage of the basal readers deal with animal stories, biographies, history or science, fables, tales, essays, and poems. The introduction of good literature and biographies is important for the children in developing their reading interests. In this respect the publishers seemed to meet the needs of the child.

The stories surveyed have been of varied ethnic origins, and they dealt with various story settings in history as well as with different countries. Family settings were varied from city life to the suburbs. The house in the suburbs has been the popular setting for many basal reader stories and remains so in 181 out of 367 family stories in the books reviewed.

The results of this study show only 6% of the fam-

ilies being portrayed as one-parent families. This is in marked contrast to the prediction that the 1980 census will show 45%. The other side of this is that after a divorce there is usually a remarriage which results in step-parents and step-children. Not one story mentioned step-parents or step-children. Even in 1978 ten percent of all children lived with a natural parent and a step-parent. The 1980 census predictions would indicate that this percentage is much too low.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research project. The problem is restated, procedures are described and principal findings and conclusions are reported. Finally, recommendations for further research are presented.

RESTATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The author began with certain questions regarding the way the family was portrayed in eight commercially available basal reading series. This project attempted to answer the following questions: Who is included in the family unit? How many one-parent families were shown? This would also include special circumstances affecting the family, such as divorce, re-marriage, death, etc. Are the parents/guardians portrayed as holding traditional or non-traditional jobs? How many mothers are working? Are any mixed marriages present? Where does the family unit live? A final concern was to ascertain who was reading and to whom? How often and what kind of reading materials are presented in the basals? Do basal readers include pictures of people reading? Do the basals show reading materials such as signs, newspapers, magazines, books, etc.?

The author expected to find a deficiency of representation in the basals of one-parent families, working parents, and especially working mothers. The typical family would be two parents and their two children

living in a house in the suburbs. Also, the writer expected to find a general lack of interest in reading with few reading materials being used or shown in the stories and minimal role-modeling in reading being done by the characters in the basal reading series.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES USED

An evaluation form was designed after surveying those used by Jane Sutton and Robert Kealey in separate studies. This thesis was concerned with commercially available books read by first, second, and third grade students.

Basal readers printed by eight leading publishers for use in grades 1, 2, and 3 were surveyed. Every story was included; random sampling was not done as in Sutton's study. The only exceptions occurred if the publishers' table of contents seperated stories from fables, essays, biographies, etc. When this happened, they were excluded from being considered a story. When they were included in a table of contents without a special category, they were included in the total number of stories. However, to be considered as a family story the story had to be about people, be more than two pages in length and had to include a parent, grandparent or a significant other in a custodial position.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research in chapter two discusses the importance

of the family on the young child's development. The interactions within the family as well as the modeling effects of job roles and of values, reading being one of these, are critical to the child's development, especially in the preschool years. However, when separation and/or divorce occurs, the family life is upset for approximately four years from separation to re-marriage. During this time the emotional atmosphere in the family environment becomes critical. Stress, emotional and interpersonal adjustments often interfere with parenting roles, and children often have unmet needs. The extended families occurring from re-marriages present mind-boggling adjustments for all the new family members.

The above paragraph describes the dilemma in which many of our children find themselves. In 1978 ten percent of all children lived with a natural parent and a stepparent. The U. S. Bureau of the Census projects that forty-eight percent of all children born in 1980 will live a "considerable time" with only one parent before they reach 18 years of age. This represents 12 million children.

Are the publishers of the eight basal reading series that were surveyed keeping up with the changing American family? Do their stories reflect these changes noted in society?

The author expected to find a deficiency of representation in the basals of one-parent families, working

parents, and especially working mothers; and this was confirmed. In this study thirty-two percent of the stories related to families but only six percent portrayed a one-parent family situation. Only stories that were clearly one-parent families were listed in this category. Often the family situation was vague, and the reader was permitted to interject his/her own interpretations. Re-marriage, step-parents, and step-children were never mentioned. Death of a parent was referred to twice, but it occurred before the story started. Divorce was mentioned clearly once and eluded to twice. Only one story of an adopted child, one of an orphan, and one of a child in a Boy's Home were found in the material covered in this study.

The work world of these families was also vague or non-existent. Both parents working in a two-parent family was clearly established in only nine stories. The jobs of most parents/guardins frequently went unmentioned. In the seventeen stories that were mother-headed, one-parent households, five held traditional jobs, six non-traditional and six were listed as "unknown work status".

The stories surveyed were of varied ethnic origins and dealt with various story settings in history and in different countries. The family settings were varied from city life to the popular house in the suburbs. The house in the suburbs remains the most popular setting

for 181 basal stories in the books surveyed. Very often the nationality of the characters was very vague and could not be determined. There were no mixed nationality marriages found in this study.

The author surveyed the books mentioned to see who reads to whom? This author agrees with Durkin and Teale and others who note the importance of having varied reading materials in the home, and having the child see family members read, as well as having parents and others read to them. Therefore, the results of this aspect of the survey were shocking, but expected, because not much modeling took place in the basals. Children were reading in 32 stories. However, parents read very little; fathers read in 8 stories and mothers in 6 stories. Still more surprising results were found when surveyed who reads to whom? There was a single portrayal of a father reading to a child, and two stories where a mother read to a child. A child read to another child in five stories, and a babysitter read to a child in one story. In some stories no one read to someone else in all the books for grades 1, 2, and 3, and very few reading materials are shown. In these cases, a child can read for three years and never see a role-model for reading in their required reading books.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The basal reading series have done much to tie

the past to the present. Many stories of past history were presented which included various family lifestyles. However, the 1982 lifestyles of a large percentage of our students are overlooked. The first recommendation is that the publishers become more sensitive to one-parent family situations. It is suggested that at least one story per grade level deal with a one-parent family in a current life situation.

The second recommendation is that the publishers become more aware of their responsibility for presenting reading as something important. Publishers have a captive audience at a very impressionable age (grades 1-3) and they should present reading as something desirable and worth doing. Very little role-modeling is done, very few people are shown involved with reading either for pleasure or information.

What is a child really learning from these texts? All the fuss about learning to read and yet, in some cases, the child reads basals for three years and does not see that reading is important to anyone in the books since few people are seen reading to themselves; in some series no one is reading to anyone else; amd few books or magazines are shown in the story environment.

Publishers worked hard to meet the guidelines for sex and race fairness. Perhaps reading specialists will have to pressure publishers to present reading as being

important and enjoyable.

Schools selecting a reading series should consider the findings of this study when making their selection. They should choose a series that meets the needs of their population and that presents the values that they consider important.

SUMMARY

This project answered the questions it set out to answer. Certain limitations were inherent due to the number of books used. The conclusions were limited to the observations and evaluations of them by this researcher. Recommendations were made that people selecting a reading series consider these findings when making their selection. When selecting a basal series, hopefully, this study will aid school districts in choosing a series that shows the family in transition. It should also help them in selecting a series that shows reading as being important and valuable to their story characters.

Publishers should become more aware of their responsibility in presenting the American family as it is and also of the importance of showing more reading materials and role modeling in their books. Since the American family unit is in transition, perhaps the publishers of reading series must assume more responsibility for presenting the reading role-models the children need.

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APPENDIX

Survey Form

Publisher_____ Date_____

Title of Book_____ Grade_____

# of pages_____ # of stories_____ # of stories about family_____

Title of Story_____ pages_____

text picture

Child Main Character

Adult Main Character

References to family:
- Child w/two parents
- Child and mother
- Child and father_____
- Siblings only
- Child and grandma
- Child and grandpa
- Child and other relative_____
- Child and other
- Husband and wife only
- Extended family_____

References to # of siblings
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- or more_____

Significant adults:
- Aunt; custodial
  non-custodial
- Uncle; custodial
  non-cuatodial
- Grandma; custodial
  non-custodial
- Grandpa; custodial
  non-custodial
- babysitter
- teacher
- religious leader

Situations:
- parental death_____
- parental divorce
- ~~any divorce~~

parental remarriage
any remarriage_____
step parent: mother
father
foster parent
foster child
adoption
never married parent

Type of housing:
City Apartment
house
Suburbs apartment
house
Condo.
Trailer
Other

Definite 2 parent family:
Father working trad.
non-trad.
Mother working trad.
non-trad.
Both working
Unknown work status
Live in relative

Definite 1 parent family:
Mother headed
working - trad.
non-trad.
unknown work
unemployed
Father headed
working -trad.
non-trad.
unknown work
unemployed

Nationality:
Caucasian
Black
Oriental
Mixed marriage

READING

Reading material shown:
newspapers
books
magazines
other

Who is READING?
Father
Mother
Child
Other
(P - pleasure; Inf - information; D - directions; I - instructions)

Who is READING to whom?
Father to child
Mother to child
Parent to parent
Child to child
Babysitter to child
Teacher to child
Other

LIST OF BASAL READER PUBLISHERS USED FOR GRADES 1, 2, AND 3

Allyn & Bacon

Economy

Ginn

Harper and Row Publishers

Holt

Houghton Mifflin Company

Macmillan Incorporated

Scott Foresman and Company